

~~14~~ TWO *Ser. 14.*

SERMONS

Preached in the

34
Trinity-Church

I N

Kingston upon **HULL,**

O N

Sunday, January 3d. 1696.

By **THO. FAIRWEATHER**, Vicar of
Great Grimsby, in the County of Lincoln.

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TO THE
 RIGHT WORSHIPFUL
Mr. Rob. Mafon, Mayor,
 And the Worshipful
 The Aldermen and Recorder
 OF THE
 Town of Kingston upon HULL.

TIS to no purpose to acquaint the World with the Motives that induced me to Publish the following Sermons ; for after the best Apology I can make, I despair of escaping the Censures of Envy and Ill Nature. Nor do I expect that the Discourses themselves will meet with better Entertainment in such a Critical and Censorious Age. The Subject of them, if I may be allowed to say it, is good and useful ; which gives me Encouragement to hope, that notwithstanding the Defects in the Mannagery of it, they will be favourably accepted by Persons of Candor and Ingenuity. Such as they are, I humbly Present you with them, in a Thankful Acknowledgment of my Obligati-

The Epistle Dedicatory.

~~ons to you, which, though the Easiest Part of the~~
~~Duty of Obliged Persons, is the onely Return~~
This being the best Return I am in a Capacity
of making, for your Commendatory Letter in my
behalf to his Grace the Duke of Leeds, A
Kindness whereof I have, and shall ever Re-
tain a most grateful Sense, which had it suc-
ceeded, could not have been Recompenc'd with
the Service of my whole Life. I am,

Gentlemen,

Your most Obliged and

Humble Servant,

THO. FAIRWEATHER.

The

The First Sermon.

LUKE II. 11.

*For unto you is born this day in the City of David,
a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.*

THese are the words of the Angel, who Proclaimed *the Nativity of the Holy Jesus*. The Manner of his Birth, in the Opinion of the World, was very unbecoming the Eternal Son of God. He was not born in the *Capital City of Judea*, and in a magnificent and richly furnisht Palace, but in a homely Stable, within a strong Cave, belonging to an obscure Village, being unattended and destitute of the usual Accommodations of New-born Infants. This, together with the Poverty of his Life, and the Sufferings of his Death, the admirers of worldly Greatness think mean and contemptible, and a *sufficient Confutation* of our Blessed Saviours Divinity. But his Divine Original is abundantly evident, as from the many and uncommon Miracles of his Life, so from the Extraordinary Appearances at his Birth. For a Glorious Angel, *Gabriel* probably the Blessed Messenger of Evangelical

It was usual for the Jews to make Stables within a hollow Rock. And that Christ was born in a Cave, Grotius proves from the consent of all Antiquity.

Ti-

Vid. Dan. 9. Tidings, [and according to Tradition, one of
^{21.}
 Luke 1.19--the Seven Arch-angels that Minister before
 26. the Throne of God,] was dispatched from
 Heaven to make known his Nativity; which
 being Proclaim'd from a radiant Cloud, was
 celebrated with a Sacred Anthem sung by
 a Choir of the Heavenly Host, the Illustrious
 Retinue of this great Minister of Heaven.
 These things bespeak him some great and ex-
 traordinary Person, and we are assured from
 the mouth of the Angel himself, that He
 was no less then the promised Messiah, the
 Saviour of the World. And the Angel said
 unto them (the Shepherds) *Fear not; for behold
 I bring unto you good tidings, of great joy which
 shall be unto all people. For unto you is born this day
 in the City of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the
 Lord.*

In the Text Two Things are observable:

1. *The Birth of Christ.*
2. *The End and Design of it, implied in the term Saviour.*

Concerning the Birth of Christ, here are
 Three Circumstances worthy our consideration. 1.
The Place. 2. *The Time of it.* 3. *The Persons
 for whom he was Born.*

*The Place of his Birth was Bethlehem, cal-
 led in the Text, the City of David, because
 David*

David was Born there. This was plainly foretold by Micah, Ch. 5. 2. *Thou Bethlehem, Ephratah, tho thou be little among the Thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth, that is to be the Ruler in Israel.* The accomplishment of which Prediction is very remarkable, *Augustus* intending to take Account of the State of the *Roman Empire*, of which *Judea* was then a Province, Published an Edict for Taxing, or Inrolling, according to their Families and Estates, all Persons within his Dominions. In obedience to this decree, which obliged every one to be Inroll'd in the Place where their *Ancestors* were Born, *Joseph*, with his pregnant Spouse, being Lineally descended from King David, went from *Nazareth* to *Bethlehem*; where the Period for her Delivery being accomplished, she brought forth her first-born Son, *Jesus Christ*. I dare not say, *Augustus* was by a Divine impulse incited to this action; for David's numbering the people of *Israel*, is expressly attributed to the suggestion or provocation of the Devil, 1 Chr. 21. 1. Yet God's over-ruling this Design, and accomplishing his secret purpose by it, is very obvious. This Taxing, as *S. Luke* observes, was first begun when *Cyrenius* was Governour of *Syria*, which was about 27 years before our Saviour was born. But the Peace of the Empire being then disturb'd, it was suspended till the very point of time prefixed for

for his birth, who being conceived at *Nazareth*, was upon this occasion, contrary to the intention of the *Virgin Mary*, his Mother, born in the City of *David*. This plainly shews, that God did then concern himself in disposing the affairs of the World. And we have no reason to question the continuance of his Care and Providence in all times succeeding. Many Passages in the Divine Administration, by reason of the imperfection of our knowledg, appear to us confused & perplext. There are Difficulties in it, of which we can give no account, Depths which the short Line of our finite understanding cannot fathom. Yet in every Age there are sundry occurrences, in which the *Footsteps of Providence* are discernable to a careless Eye. [If we consult *our own observation*, it will furnish us with Instances not inferior to those of former times. Our *late Deliverance*, to look no further back, *from the Pressures of Arbitrary Power*, as it may compare with *the Deliverances of the Jewish Nation*, so the Hand of God was no less visible in it. The Dangers that threatned *our Liberties and Religion*, were foreseen at some distance, and great endeavours used for our future security. But without success. The *Dreaded Prince* ascends the Throne, and soon makes it appear, that our Fears and Jealousies were not ill grounded. The *Laws* are trampled on, our *Liberties* oppressed, and our *Religion*,
with

with its faithful Friends, devoted to Destruction. But indulgent Heaven had decreed our Preservation, and laid the Foundation of it some years before, in *the Marriage of the Illustrious Prince of Orange with our Renowned Princess of Blessed Memory*. And when we were in extremity of trouble, upon the brink of Destruction, and a way was found out to perpetuate our slavery, God graciously remembered us, and raised us up a Deliverer, who despising the Dangers and Difficulties of the Adventure, resolved to assert *the Rights of the Injured*, and to *rescue an oppressed people*. Upon whole arrival here, tho with very unequal Forces, the Oppressors *struck with a panick fear*, decline Battle and withdraw, leaving the Kingdom without Government. And now considering the Murmurings and Discontents of some kindled, and carried by the Ill Designs of others, under the specious pretences of Loyalty and Conscience, and the variety of Interests and Parties among us, what could be expected but Storms and Tempests, Distraction and Confusion? And yet the Clouds break, our Heats and Animosities abate, and the Body of the Nation unanimously conspire in placing the forsaken Crown upon the Head of our Deliverer. A strange Revolution, which all the Circumstances of it considered, is scarce to be parallell'd in Story. And as it is wonderful in the Eyes of all, so 'twas undoubtedly the Lords doing. *The Finger of God was visibly in it, and there are plain*

Signatures and Characters upon it, of a more immediate Divine Interposition. What can be more absurd and irrational, then to ascribe such extraordinary Events to Chance, or humane Policy? Where there is no proportion between an Event and the Visible Instruments of effecting it: When Prophecies are fulfill'd without any humane Contrivance and Foresight; and besides the Intentions of those who are Instrumental in it, this is a manifest Proof, that the world is under the care and conduct of an Invisible Power and Wisdom, which by weak means baffles and confounds the strongest Forces, and most Politick Contrivances; And by Actions which aim at, and are directed to other Ends, brings to pass his own secret purposes and decrees.

2. Another Circumstance of Christs Birth, is the Time of it. Concerning the precise time of the Year when He was born, there is Variety of Opinions among the Learned. But seeing the exact knowledge of this is a matter of *no great moment*, so long as the *Memory of his Birth* is preserv'd and celebrated by an *Anniversary Festival*, I shall not spend time in examining the grounds on which their Conclusions are establish'd. That which is most worthy observation, and to which I shall confine my Reflections, is the *Appearance of Christ in the last times, in the End of the World*, *ἐν τοῖς ἡμέτεροις αἰσὶν*, at the Consummation of the Ages. It may

may seem strange, that he from whom such *inestimable blessings are derived to mankind*, should be manifested only *in the last of the Ages, or Dispensations of the World*. And upon this Porphyry grounds his Objection against the *Christian Religion*. If the Religion taught and delivered by Christ be so great a blessing, why was it published no sooner? Why did the Author of it appear so late? Now tho' the Counsels of God are unfearchable, yet the Account a Learned Modern Writer gives of this matter, seems to me very rational and satisfactory. The Incarnation of the Son of God, is a Stupendious Mystery. And it cannot be imagin'd, that the World would have ever received any one that should pretend to such a Relation, unless they had been prepared to expect him. God therefore saw it fit to delay the sending his Son, until necessary Preparations were made to incline the World to receive him. And if the State of the World, from the Beginning, to the Birth of our Saviour be diligently consider'd, it will appear that it was never so well prepared to entertain him, as at that time when he actually appeared. For by the Dispersions of the *Jews* the knowledge of the true God was propagated among the Gentiles. Several of whom in all nations embraced the Jewish Religion, and by frequenting their Synagogues became acquainted with the *Scriptures and Prophecies concerning the*

*Discourse
concern-
ing Provi-
dence.*

Messias : And when the World was thus disposed and prepared, then *God sent his Sou into it.* The *advantages* the World received by this *Appearance of the Son of God in our Nature*, are incomparably great. God was never wanting to mankind in any thing necessary to their salvation : And if mens Improvements were answerable to the Helps afforded them, God *accepted* their weak and less perfect Attainments. But the Gospel delivers a perfect Rule of Life, describes our duty with the greatest plainness and certainty, and furnishes us with the most powerful Assistances and prevailing motives to Virtue and Goodness. *And if much is required of them, to whom much is given,* We who have greater Advantages then the rest of the World, must be obliged to greater heights of Virtue, and a more perfect Obedience. A Christian must not live after the rate of other men, but endeavour after greater Measures of Holiness. Our Improvements in Goodness, must bear proportion to the means and helps the Gospel supplies us with. As we have received more then others, so our Returns of Duty and Obedience, must be answerable to the greatness of our receipts. *And if we are not more Righteous then the Moral Heathen, nay, then the Scribes and Pharisees, the strictest and most exact observers of the Law, we shall in no case enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, Mat. 5. 20.*

3. The Third Point of Consideration is the Persons for whom *Christ* was born: *Unto you is born*, &c. which is not to be understood in a restrained sense, but must be extended to the whole race of mankind. Our Saviour's Mission, as himself tells us, was limited to the Jews, *Mat. 15. 24.* And to the Apostles, when sent to preach the Gospel, he gave particular instructions, to apply themselves to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, *Mat. 10. 5, 6.* But after his Resurrection he enlarged their Commission, commanding them to teach or proselyte all Nations, *Mat. 28. 19.* To preach Repentance and forgiveness of sins in his Name among all Nations, *Luke 24. 47.* which comprehends not only the Jews dispers'd in all Nations, as the Apostles seemed to understand it, but all people in every Nation, as well Gentile as Jew. And tho there are great numbers to whom the Gospel was never preach'd, yet if these live in the conscientious observance of the Natural Rules of Sobriety, Justice and Piety, their ignorance of *Christ* will not prejudice their salvation. For in every Nation he that feareth God, and worketh Righteousness, is accepted of him, *Acts 10. 35.* And as all men in general, and every person in particular, is by *Christ* entitled to salvation, so Man is the only creature concern'd in his Birth, so as to receive benefit by it. By the great joy the blessed Angels express on the morning of his Nativity, one would be apt to conclude, that they received some addition to, or at least were confirm'd in the possession of their original happiness. But neither of these is assigned as the cause

cause of it. The ground of their rejoicing was the
The Con- Reconciliation of God to Man. Glory to God in the
junction is not to be highest, καὶ ἐπὶ γῆς εἰρήνη; For there is peace on earth, good
is not to be taken here will towards men, Lu. 2. 14. As for the Apostate Spi-
*for a Co-*rits, who for their Rebellion against God, were cast
pulative, out of Heaven, they were irreversibly sentenc'd to
but as Eternal Torments. Origen's Opinion concerning the
Vau is frequent-ly in the Hebrew final salvation of the Devils, hath no other foundati-
ly in the on than a mistaken apprehension of the Inequality of
Hebrew for a Con- junction, God's Mercy and Justice. The fire prepared for 'em,
for a Con- Disc. 24. is said to be everlasting, Mat. 25. 41. The Original
junction, word is the very same by which the eternal state
Caulat. of the Blessed is expressed. And 'tis certain no
Mede course was taken by Christ for their recovery. For
Disc. 24. he took not on him the nature of Angels, Heb. 2. 16. ὁ
 γὰρ σῶν ἀγγέλων οὐ λαμβάνει, He doth not take hold of
 Angels; that is, as the word signifies, he doth not reco-
 ver, or fetch them back from the miserable state into
 which they are fallen; but the mercy which was deny'd
 to Angels is extended to Men, to whom, out of meer
 compassion, without any desert of ours, God was
 pleased to propose terms of reconciliation and agree-
 ment. Lord, what is Man, that thou hast such respect unto
 him? Thou mad'st him little lower than the Angels; and
 when he had sunk himself into a condition worse
 than that of the Beasts that perish, thou didst rescue
 him out of this wretched state, and restore him to
 a capacity of the happiness he had forfeited. But
 O unhappy Man! If he neglect so great Salva-
 tion, and resist such wonderful Love and Kind-
 ness

Ham-
mond Pr.
lat. p. 15.

ness. To sin against pardoning mercy and saving Love, is the greatest Provocation imaginable, and the Punishment will bear proportion to the greatness of the Guilt. If we reject the gracious offers of Salvation, Eternal Flames will be our Portion. And the severity of the Divine Vengeance in our Condemnation, will be as astonishing, as the Mercy of God in his Reconciliation to Mankind. I come now to the second Part of the Text.

2. *The Design and End of Christ's Birth*, Implied in the word, *Saviour*. This Title was usually given vid. by the Ancient *Grecians* to their Gods, and some-Pearson, Act. 2. times to Men in a Grateful Acknowledgment, of some Eminent and Signal Preservation. And the same is in the *Old Testament* bestowed on the Judges, who delivered the *Israelites* from Oppression. But the Title of *Saviour*, is not attributed to Christ in Reference to any Temporal Deliverance. He came not to Vindicate the Liberty of his Country, and to Conquer the Neighbouring Nations. This the *Jews* fondly expected from their *Messias*, and the Apostles promised themselves no less from the *Blessed Jesus*. But he plainly told them, *That his Kingdom was not of this World; that he came to call Sinners to Repentance, and to give his life a Ransome for many*. This is the Glorious End for which he came into the World, *To save men from their Sins, and to restore them to a Capacity of Eternal Happiness*. A Deliverance worthy the Son of God, and for which he is in a more Sublime and Peculiar manner, a *Saviour*. 1. The

1. *The End of his coming into the World, was to save men from their sins.* This the Name given him at his Circumcision, Imports, according to the Account the Angel gave of it to Joseph, Mat. 1.

21. *Thou shalt call his Name Jesus, for he shall save his People from their sins.* Which Salvation consists in delivering them. 1. From the Punishment. 2.

From the Dominion of them. *The Punishment due to sin is both Temporal and Eternal.* As to the former

Christ hath removed and taken off, as to the main, our obligation to it, and upon our sincere Repentance, we may reasonably hope to escape unpunish'd. This indeed is no security from sufferings.

For Afflictions are of great use, to wean our affections from the World, to inflame our devotions, and to encrease our Desires of Heavenly things; which justifies the Justice and Goodness of God, in afflicting good men, after their Sins are forgiven. Nay, in some cases they may be obnoxious to Punishment, the Pardon of their sins notwithstanding. That the Infinite satisfaction of Christ, does not absolutely exempt them, is evident from the Example of David. When Nathan had told him, that God had put away his sins, he

Tower-
son on the
Creed, p.
330.

adds, as a Learned Man observes, by way of a statement of that forgiveness, *Howbeit, Because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the Enemies of the Lord to Blaspheme, the Child also that is born of thee shall surely die,* 2 Sam. 12. 14. Which is a plain Reverse of Punishment after Pardon. Nor is

this

this inconsistent with *the nature of forgiveness of sin*, which consists in taking off the *obligation to punishment in general*; for this does not necessarily extend to a full and absolute discharge from all sort of punishment, but may admit of *some limitation*. *vid* As to any *Remains of punishment*, to be discharg'd in ^{Tower-son, *ibid.*} a future state, for expiating the temporal punishments due to sin, which is the foundation of the *Romish Purgatory*, this is derogatory to the fullness and sufficiency of the satisfaction of the Son of God, and is a Politic Invention of that Church, from whence the *Ecclesiastics* suck to themselves no small advantage. Our absolute deliverance from eternal punishment can admit of no dispute. For S. Paul tells us in exprefs terms, that Christ has deliver'd us from the wrath to come, 1 Tb. 1. 10. and we are assured from Scripture, that good men immediately after death are translated to a state of happiness; and that this happiness is not for a time, but for evermore; which is inconsistent with their enduring any punishment after this Life.

2. He came to save us from our sins, by delivering us from the power and dominion of them. Altho he hath obtain'd of God a grant of Pardon for all sinners; that is, for all men, yet this is actually applied to none but such as forsake their sins, and become new creatures. If men lead wicked and unholy lives, they shall perish in their sins, notwithstanding all that Christ hath done and suffered towards the procuring the forgiveness of them. For he came not to purchase for us a License to sin, but to reform the manners

of men, and to plant *Vertue and Piety in the World*. And this the *Scripture* assigns as the principal design of his *Incarnation*. For this purpose, saith *S. John*, the *Son of God* was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the *Devil*, *1 Ep. 3. 8*. Agreeable to this is that of *S. Paul*, *Tit. 2. 14*. Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to himself a peculiar people zealous of good works. And *S. Peter* gives the same account, *Act. 3. 26*. God having raised up his *Son Jesus*, sent him to bless you, in turning every one of you from his iniquities. From all which it appears, that the great end and business for which he came into the world, was to turn us from our sins to the practice of holiness. For the effecting whereof he took the most effectual methods, and which can't fail of success with all wise and considerate persons, who have any regard to themselves, and their own Interest. For to engage men to renounce their sins, he acquaints them with the absolute necessity of repentance, as without which they must unavoidably and irrecoverably perish. And for the Encouragement of the greatest Offenders, he shews how ready God is to be reconciled to them, provided they betake themselves to a better course of life. This is the design of the Parable of the Prodigal Son, whom upon his sorrow for his lewd and riotous life, and promise of better obedience, the offended Father embraces with great kindness, and forgives him all his past Extravagancies. And to the same purpose is another Parable, concerning the lost sheep, for the recovery whereof

The First Sermon.

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whereof the owner greatly rejoices. By the former our Saviour gives us to understand, *that God is willing to pardon the greatest of sinners, upon their return to him by true repentance.* And by the latter, *that the conversion of a sinner is matter of great joy to the Inhabitants of Heaven,* in the application of it, *I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, that need no repentance,* Lu. 15. 7. Then which, sinners cannot possibly have a greater encouragement to repentance & amendment of life.

And lest the difficulty of the work should discourage us, he hath promised, and is ready to bestow on all that sincerely pray for it, the assistance of his *Holy Spirit*, to enable us to *extirpate evil Habits*, to *subdue our Passions*, to *mortifie our Lusts*, to *resist Temptations*, and to *perform all the Duties of Religion.*

And the better to confirm and animate us in our Resolutions and Endeavours of a Holy Life, he hath proposed the Glories of Heaven, as the reward of a *persevering Piety.* And lest any should content themselves with a Negative Religion, and think it sufficient to abstain from Evil, without employing themselves in doing the Will of God; he hath forewarn'd us of the danger of *sins of Omission*; for describing the Proceedings of the great day, Mat. 25. he shews, *that Men shall be condemned to eternal Flames for their Neglect of Works of Mercy and Charity.* Such was the design of the Son of God's appearing in our Nature, not only to deli-

ver us from eternal Misery, but to redeem us from our vain Conversation, by turning as from our Sins, and sanctifying our Natures; without which we could not have been happy, notwithstanding our Redemption from the miseries of an eternal death. For Sin in its own nature tends to make Men miserable; it fills the Mind with anguish & confusion; afflicts the Body with painful Diseases, which are the natural Effects of some Vices, and it involves the Sinner in many Troubles & Mischiefs, which are a great disturbance to him; so that in the course of a wicked and licentious life he can have no tollerable enjoyment of himself. And if it be the occasion of so great trouble, disquiet and misery herein, what will it be hereafter? For the Soul retains the same dispositions in a seperate State, which it has whilst it lives in the Body, which are so far from being alter'd or destroy'd, that they are heightned and improv'd by Death: For being stript of Flesh and Blood, and all those Objects removed, which were wont to divert it, its Passions become more violent and raging, more vexatious & troublesome to others, and the more afflictive and tormenting to it self: So that supposing Men, when they die, to remove hence into a new State, their Lusts and Passions, which accompany them, must render their condition very uneasie and miserable. In order therefore to our freedom from misery, 'tis necessary that we should be freed from the dominion of our Sins.

Sins, that our Minds should be purified and made conformable to the Divine Nature, in Righteousness and true Holiness. And this is that great Blessing, which the Son of God came into the World to make us Partakers of. A favour, for which we have as great reason to rejoyce, as for his obtaining a grant of Pardon, and a Promise of Heaven for us. For what would this have signified, had we remain'd in an impenitent and unreform'd State? The impurity of our Minds, and the wickedness of our Natures would have made us miserable notwithstanding, and incapable of that Happiness, to which we had been intitled. For the Happiness of Heaven consists in such things which a *sensual and carnal mind can have no gust or relish of*; nay, so far would it be from taking delight and satisfaction in them, that 'twould be afflicted with *the presence of things so contrary and disagreeable to its corrupt and depraved appetites*. But if holiness be so necessary to our happiness, and the Son of God assumed our nature on purpose to make us happy, why does he not by an irresistible grace, change our evil natures, restore the Image of God in our minds, and make us holy and pure in conformity to his own Divine Nature? This indeed would infallibly secure mens salvation, and prevent their being miserable. But tho he would not that any should perish, but that all should be saved, yet he will not force Heaven upon men, but will have it to be the Reward of their own free Choice, and vertuous Endeavours. He deals with

with us as rational creatures, and free Agents; gives us Laws to direct our Practice, the observance whereof will certainly bring us to Heaven; offers his Spirit to be our guide and assistant; allures our hopes with the promise of *glorious rewards*, and alarms our fears with the *most dreadful threats and menaces*. But after all, he leaves us to our liberty, whether we will comply with *his Laws*, or pursue *our Lusts*; whether we will obey the *motions of his Spirit*, or follow *our own sinful inclinations*; whether we will *accept of eternal life*, or *chuse the ways of sin and death*. Should he necessitate men to be good (if that can deserve the name of *goodness* which is not *their Choice*, but *their Fate*) he would make us other kind of creatures than we are. For such a violence to our Natures, would destroy that liberty and freedom of will wherewith Man was created, & change us from free to necessary Agents. There are not wanting *Instances of wicked persons*, at the first preaching of the Gospel, who by an over-powering degree of God's grace, were suddenly transform'd into new creatures. But such sudden changes were miraculous & extraordinary. The usual method of God's proceedings with men, is more suitable to human nature, and consistent with the natural liberty of our wills. But yet such effectual provision is made by *the grace of the Gospel* for the cure and recovery of our degenerate Natures, that 'tis in our power to become vertuous, if we please, and if we are slaves to our Lusts and Passions, it is our own fault.

2. As

2. As Christ came to save us from our sins, so also to restore us to a capacity of eternal happiness. Such is the efficacy of Christs undertaking in our behalf, that besides our redemption from death and hell, he hath obtain'd a grant of Heaven, with all its glories, for us. For whosoever believeth on him, shall not perish, but have everlasting life, Jo. 3.16. So that now we are not only deliver'd from destruction, but intitled to eternal felicity in the Kingdom of Heaven; and that not upon any hard and unreasonable terms, but on the most easy conditions of Faith, Repentance and New Obedience. For what pretence can there be for Infidelity, when Christ has given the world such undeniable assurances of his being the Son of God, by the unparallel'd Miracles he wrought in his life, and by that most irrefragable Testimony, his Resurrection from the dead? What can be more reasonable than the ingenuous confession of our sins, and the resolution and promise of better obedience for the time to come? What can be more easy than the practice and observance of Laws suitable to our Natures, agreeable to the frame of our minds, and which in their own nature conduce to our present happiness? On such easy and gracious conditions are we restor'd to eternal life.

Could I bring you the certain News of a Peace, or of some great Victory obtain'd over the grand Enemy of Christian Religion, it would, I am apt to believe, be very welcom and acceptable. But I declare much more joyful tidings, The Common Enemies of our salvation, Sin and Satan are vanquished and defeated; a firm and lasting Peace is concluded between
Hea-

Heaven and Earth, and the Kingdom of Heaven, from whence sinners were excluded, is now open'd to all true penitents. This is the best News that ever was published to the world, and to be unconcern'd at it, nay, to entertain it with a common and ordinary Passion, is the greatest stupidity, the highest ingratitude and affront to God and our blessed Saviour.

Did the blessed Angels, to whom no benefit or advantage accru'd by the Birth of Christ, nay, whose Dignity seems to be obscur'd and lessen'd by the Exaltation and Advancement of human Nature above them, the several Orders of the heavenly Hierarchy being subjected unto Christ, 1 Pet. 3. 22. Did they, I say, rejoice for our restitution to the favour of God, and shall we be stupid and unthankful for so great a mercy? O let us awake all the powers of our Souls, and joyn with the Angels and Archangels, and all the Company of Heaven in Lauding and Magnifying his glorious Name.

Glory be to God the Father, who out of his tender pity and compassion to mankind, gave his only begotten Son to redeem us from hell and destruction. All honour and praise be given by us and by all Creatures to his Eternal Son, who came down from his Imperial Throne and clothed himself with our flesh, to save us from our sins, and restore us to everlasting life. And for ever blessed be the eternal Spirit, who by his operation on the womb of the Virgin Mary, enabled her to conceive and bring forth a Saviour, Christ the Lord. To which holy, blessed and glorious Trinity, let us offer up and devote our selves, performing all holy obedience and service to them all the days of our lives; that when the Saviour of the world shall come at the last day in his glorious Majesty to judge the quick and dead, we may be finally absolved from all our sins, and instated in the secure possession of life and glory in the highest Heavens, where we shall spend Eternity in singing Anthems and Songs of praise to the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, the joint Authors of our salvation, and be unspeakably happy beyond what we can now conceive or imagine.

The Second Sermon.

HEB. XI. 17.

By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac, and he that had received the promises, offered up his only begotten Son.

THE Scope and Design of this Chapter is to set forth the *Nature and the Power of Faith*. ^{Hammond in} The *Nature* of it is described v. 1. where the *Apostle* ^{loc.} defines *Faith* to be the substance, or confident expectation of things hoped for, the evidence or conviction of things not seen. The Evidence of Faith is not so clear as that of Sense, for we do not assent so strongly to what we believe as to what we see and know. Yet Faith is daring and confident, being fully convinced of the Truth and Reality of those things whereof we have no Ocular and Sensible Demonstration. From the description of the Nature, he proceeds to shew the Power and Efficacy of this Grace, in enabling the Saints of Old, to do and suffer things beyond the strength of an ordinary Resolution. And amongst the many Triumphs of Faith which are here Recorded, *This of Abrahams Sacrificing his Son, is one of the most remarkable.* The chief Encouragement to which undertaking, was the firm Belief of the Promises, and his fiducial dependence on God for the performance of them. For by Faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac &c

In which words are observable the following Particulars:

1. *Gods Trial of Abraham, by commanding him to sacrifice his Son.*
2. *Abraham's Obedience to this Command.*
3. *The Motive that induced him to obey God in this difficult Service.*

I begin with the first, *God's Tryal of Abraham.* Our Thoughts and Future Actions are equally known to God. The secret motions and intentions of our souls are discernable to his piercing Eye, no less than our outward professions; nor are our present performances more visible and open to him, than what we shall do hereafter. It was not therefore for his own satisfaction that God commanded Abraham to offer his Son for a *Burnt-offering*. There needed no such discovery to inform him who is Omniscient, and understands our thoughts long before we are conscious of them. Much less was this intended as a Snare to betray Abraham into sin; for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man, Ja. 1. 12. To tempt or seduce men into sin, is the work and business of the Devil, who by way of Eminence, is frequently in Scripture called *the tempter*, and cannot without the greatest blasphemy be ascribed to God. 'Tis said indeed, that God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him, *takethy Son, &c.* Gen. 22. 1. To tempt, in the general notion of the word, signifies to make trial, and may be done for an evil End, to seduce men from their duty, into some unlawful actions.

ons. In which sense it is peculiar to the Devil and his Agents. But the end of it may be good for the benefit of the person tried; and then it can be no reflection for God to be the Author of the temptation: and of this kind was the Trial of *Abraham*; for his good was intended by it, and that in several respects. God designed to make him the Head of a powerful Nation, to bless him with a numerous Issue, of whom should at length descend the Saviour of mankind. And that he might have some Title to so great an Honour, enjoins him this extraordinary service, *the sacrifice of an only Son*. For it was in consideration of his Obedience to this Command, that he obtained this peculiar favour. *By my self have I sworn, saith the Lord, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy Son, thine only Son, that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of heaven, and as the sand which is upon the Sea-shore, and thy seed shall possess the gate of his Enemies. And in thy seed shall all the nations of the Earth be blessed, because thou hast obeyed my voice,* Gen. 22. 16, 17, 18. Those on whom God intends to bestow some extraordinary Reward, he usually exercises with severe temptations. And the Example of *Abraham* gives good men encouragement to hope for a happy issue out of their afflictions, which many times are preparatory to their happiness in this life. But if they miss of a present reward, the greater will their happiness be hereafter. Our Saviour hath taught us to

pray, that God would not lead us into the temptation of the *Evil One*. But if God think fit to tempt us, to exercise us with afflictions, which is his usual method of trying men, we have great reason to bear them not only with patience, but chearfulness; to rejoice, in hope that God will deliver us out of them with advantage, as he did *Abraham*, *Job* and others; but especially in hope of that more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, to which our light & momentary sufferings entitle us. For blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he is tried, he shall receive the Crown of Life which the Lord hath promised to them that love him, *Ja. 1. 12*. But the trial of *Abraham* did conduce to his advantage, as it gave a clear and manifest proof of his Integrity. 'Tis the Fate of many good men to fall under the hard Opinion of others, to be censured and condemned of Hypocrisy, and carrying on their worldly designs under the disguise of Religion. Thus the Devil suggested concerning *Job*, that Interest was the main principle of his Religion, that he served God not from an inward sense of duty, or out of regard to God's Authority, but only for the sake of temporal advantages that attended the profession and practice of it. Doth *Job*, says he, serve God for nought? Thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the Land; but put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face, *c. 1. 9, 10, 11*. As if he had said, Thou hast blessed *Job* with Riches and Honours, and he is become one of the

the wealthiest and most powerful men in the East, so that 'tis no wonder if he appear religious, and express a great Zeal for thy Service, which he hath found so advantageous. But stop the Current of thy Bounty, and withdraw the blessings of which he is possesst, and he will soon forsake thee and thy service, and be no longer religious. The Conscience of a man's Integrity is a great support and comfort to him against uncharitable censures, and false accusations. Yet to be ill thought and spoken of, is no pleasing thing. The fair opinion of other men, is that which most are desirous of. And the reputation of Integrity is not by any thing more effectually obtain'd than by a constant adherence to the principles of Religion at all times. When a man obeys God, not only when he has a prospect of advantage, but when his obedience engages him in sufferings, and is prejudicial to his temporal Interest, this is a clear Vindication of his honesty and sincere affection to God and Religion. Job's retaining his Righteousness in the lowest ebb of adversity, plainly confuted the Devil's suggestion. And by the readiness of Abraham to offer up Isaac, his undissembled Piety and Love to God, was fully manifested to the world. For they who dissemble, and make a shew of Religion for sinister ends, will not suffer for it, but in time of temptation fall away.

Lastly, Abraham received a further and more considerable benefit by this trial, viz. A comfortable hope of his perseverance, and consequently of his salvation.

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His resolute adherence to God in spite of all difficulties, and overcoming this so powerful a temptation, could not but inspire him with a strong confidence of his Faithfulness even unto death. *For tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, & experience hope, Rom. 5. 3, 4.* The knowledge of our sincerity in any act of Obedience, is a matter of no great difficulty. For what can a man know concerning himself, if not the reality of his own intentions? But 'tis no such easy thing to be assured of our perseverance in the paths of Vertue. The Apostle's caution, *1 Cor. 10. 12. Let him that thinketh he standeth, or shall stand, take heed lest he fall,* supposeth a possibility of falling from a State of Grace, or at least a danger of miscarrying to those who presume themselves secure. But altho the absolute certainty of our persevering is not ordinarily attainable, yet from the experience of our constancy in time of trial, we may reasonably hope for a successful accomplishment of our Christian warfare, that we shall *fight a good fight, and finish our course.* And what a comfort and satisfaction must it be to a man to have a rational and well-grounded hope of this? He no longer mourns the Fears of Falling off from God, and of the misery that attends his Apostacy, but triumphs with the great Apostle in a confident expectation of that Crown of Righteousness which is laid up for him, *2 Tim. 4. 8.* I proceed to,

2. The 2d Particular, Abraham's Obedience to this command, for offering up his only begotten Son. The

Contrariety of this Injunction to the dictates of Nature, and its inconstitence with the promise of God concerning *a posterity as numerous as the stars of heaven*, we may easily imagine did not a little startle and surprize him. For how could he expect to be the *Father of many Nations*, according as God had promised, *Gen. 15. 5.* if *Isaac*, his only Son, were offered up for a *Burnt-offering*? But what could be more inhuman and barbarous, then to embrue his hands in the blood of an Innocent? For a Father to be the Executioner of his own child? The shedding of blood was forbid by one of the 7 Precepts of the Sons of *Noah*, and natural Reason did condemn the killing of a Son, as the height of impiety. But notwithstanding the plausible suggestions of Reason and Religion, to the contrary, *Abraham* resolved to be obedient to God, of whole will and pleasure herein he was fully assured, whether by an audible voice from *heaven*, or by the appearance of the Son of God, who was wont frequently to confer with him, & other of the *Jewish Patriarchs*, in a human Form, or by some other method, is not determined in Scripture. In pursuance of God's command, he prepares for his journey, seeks no pretences for delay, but rises early in the morning; and having prepared the Wood, set forward to the place appointed, *Gen. 22. 3.* Upon the 3d day he arrives at *Moriah*, and the Altar being built, he binds his beloved *Isaac*, making no resistance, and laid him upon it with an intention to slay him. But God who de-

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delights not in human blood, sends his Angel with a countermand, who prevents *Abraham* when prepar'd to give the *fatal stroke*, and delivers *Isaac* from the intended slaughter. This was such a noble demonstration of *Abraham's faithfulness, and true piety*, that for the sake thereof, God accepted him as a righteous person, tho doubtless he had many sins and infirmities irreconcilable with unflinching and perfect obedience. For we find that *S. James* lays the stress of his justification on this very performance, c. 2. 21. *Was not Abraham our Father justified by works, when he had offered his Son upon the altar?*

And if the *Father of the faithful* was justified by works, our obedience to the commands of God must be necessary to our justification. Without this we shall not be accepted as righteous persons, nor obtain eternal happiness. An idle, unactive Faith is of no account, will stand us in no stead. Yet this is that the generality of men depend upon. A presumptuous reliance on Christ for salvation is become almost an Epidemic disease. They believe in Christ, who hath made an attonement for their sins, and fulfill'd all righteousness, and this they think will be accepted without any *inherent righteousness of their own*. But this being a great mistake, and of dangerous consequence to the souls of men, I shall discourse it a little more largely than my present argument requires. If we search the Scriptures, we shall find, that the condition of our justification is an obediential and practical Faith,

Faith, such a belief in Christ as is accompanied with obedience to the Laws of the Gospel. So S. Paul expressly tells us, Gal. 5. 6. In Christ Jesus neither Circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but Faith which worketh by Love. Or, as the word may be rendred, Faith which is perfected by Love, viz. the love of God & our Neighbour, which comprehends the whole of our duty. So that without the performance of all those duties we owe to God and Man, our Faith is imperfect, and will not save us. And this is agreeable to the plain declaration of our Saviour, Mat. 7. 21. Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, that believes in me, and professeth to be my disciple, shall enter into the Kingdom of heaven, but he that doth the will of my Father which is in Heaven. Nay, tho we had such a degree of Faith as to enable us to work Miracles, yet if our Actions are contrary to the Doctrine delivered by Christ, he will finally condemn us at the day of Judgment. Many will say unto me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy Name, and in thy Name have cast out Devils, and in thy Name done many wonderful works? and then will I profess unto them, I never knew you, depart from me ye that work iniquity, v. 22, 23. 'Tis true there are some in S. Paul's Epistles, which ascribe our Justification to Faith without works; and with respect to Abraham, it is said, That his believing the promise of God concerning the birth of a Son, was imputed to him for righteousness, Rom. 4. But then it is to be considered, that the Faith St. Paul speaks of as the condition of our Justification, is such a belief as produces in us Evangelical Obedience

dience. For so himself tells us, *That nothing will avail or be accepted under the Gospel, but Faith which worketh, or is made perfect by Love ; that is, such a Faith as I now described, as is fully evident from a parallel place, 1 Cor. 7. 19. Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing but the keeping the commandments of God.* Now if *Faith working by Love*, and *keeping the commandments of God*, are phrases of the same importance, 'tis certain that the Faith by which we are justified, is an operative and obedient Faith; and by *the works which he rejects, as having any thing to do in the matter of our justification*, cannot be meant the services and performances the Gospel prescribes, but the works of the Ceremonial Law, Circumcision, Sacrifices, &c. These Legal Observances the Apostle utterly rejects, and ascribes our Justification to Faith, in opposition to them, which some believing Jews, out of a Zeal and Veneration for Moses, would have retain'd together with Christianity, and oblig'd the Gentiles to the observation of them. But he does by no means intend to exclude as unnecessary, our obedience to the Laws of Christ, but on the contrary, plainly & frequently requires it, as of absolute necessity to our acceptance with God.

But was not Abraham justified by Faith without works? And will it not follow, his Justification being the pattern of ours, that our believing in Christ, without any additional works, will be imputed to us for righteousness? as S. Paul himself argues, Rom. 4. 23, 24. where he tells us, *that the account of Abraham's justification was not written for his sake alone, but for*

us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead. To which I answer, 1. That the works without which Abraham was justified, were the Institutions and Ceremonies of the *Mosaical Law*. The design of the Apostle in his Ep. to the *Romans*, was to convince the *Jews* of the no-necessity of Circumcision, & other legal observances, which he proves from the Example of *Abraham*, who was justified without such kind of works. For God accepted him as a righteous person, before he was circumcised, & appointed Circumcision, as a Seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised, Ro. 4. 11.

2. It must be acknowledged, that he was justified upon his believing the promise of a Son. He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strong in faith, being fully persuaded, that what he had promised he was able to perform, Rom. 4. 20, 21. And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness, v. 22. But this belief of God's promise was accompanied with a resolution of doing his will, which God, who knows the heart, did discern to be sincere, and such as would hold out in time of trial, as we find it did in the following course of his life. So that the Faith by which he was justified, was an active Faith, which upon all occasions exerted it self in vital actions. And this is what S. James asserts, *Abraham was justified by works*. For he makes this the fulfilling the Scripture, which saith, *Abraham believed God, and it was imputed to him for righteousness*. Which could not be, unless by works, he

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means a *working Faith*, such a belief as excited him to works or acts of obedience to God. And on the same terms God will accept our persons, and pardon our sins. If we believe on Christ, and give up our selves wholly to be govern'd by him, we shall be justified by our Faith. But if in the course of our actions we transgress the Laws of God, & live in a wilful neglect of religious Duties, our hopes of being justified by believing and relying on Christ for salvation, will deceive us. *For as the Body without the Spirit is dead, so Faith without works is dead also,* Jam. 2. 26.

3. The last thing observable in the Text is, *The motive that induced Abraham to obey God in this difficult service.* The Command of God was not only a *Warrant*, but an *Obligation* to Abraham to sacrifice his Son. And doubtless so good a man, his Reason and Conscience being satisfied of the lawfulness and necessity of the thing, would have done it without any other consideration, purely in obedience to the Authority of God, to whom all creatures owe an intire subjection. Yet that which had the greatest influence upon him in this severe trial, was his Faith & dependance on God for the performance of his promise. He had already experienced his truth and power, in giving him a Son in his old age, and as to what he had promised concerning a numerous posterity to descend from him, he was assured that it should likewise be fulfill'd. And tho the sacrificing this Son, seem'd to be directly contrary to the hopes he had entertain'd, yet he

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knew that God was able to restore his Son, when dead, to life again, and was confident he would do it, rather than fail in performing his promise. In full assurance whereof he resolves not to be wanting in his duty to God, but to offer up his only begotten Son, *accounting that God was able to raise him up even from the dead, from whence also he received him in a figure*; as it is in the v. immediately following the Text. So powerful is this grace of Faith, that it will enable a man to conquer the greatest difficulties. The firm belief of God's Promises would be the governing principle of our actions, & have a mighty influence upon us in time of temptation. What God said to *Joshua*, *I will never leave thee nor forsake thee*, contains a promise to every true Christian, of being supplied with all things necessary for his support in his earthly Pilgrimage, *He. 13. 5.* Did we believe this, we should confidently rely on God's Care and Providence, and never attempt, by unlawful and forbidden means, to supply our own wants. Extreme want is a great temptation to human Nature, and there are not, perhaps, many persons that could resist it. When men are reduc'd to extremity, and have no prospect of ordinary succours, 'tis usual to fly to unlawful ways for relief. But this proceeds from a distrust of God, and a disbelief of his particular Providence. A full persuasion of God's Providential Care of all his Creatures, would enable them patiently to expect God's provisions. As we see not only in the case of our Saviour, who after a Fast of 40 days, refused to

supply the necessities of Nature by extraordinary means; but also in the case of the Prophets and holy men of old, who under the greatest destitution relied upon God; *Wandering about in Sheep-skins and Goat-skins, being destitute and afflicted, Heb. 11.37.*

Again, as to the other world, the great Promise respecting it, is the *Resurrection of our bodies to everlasting life*. And what will not the firm belief and persuasion of so great a happiness enable a man to do or suffer? He who with an eye of Faith contemplates the glories of Heaven, despises this world with all its charms & terrors. The dazzling honours and soft pleasures of the *Egyptian Court* could not allure *Moses*, when once he contemplated the far greater glories of a future state. *For by faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, chusing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season, Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the Treasures in Egypt, for he had respect to the recompence of the reward, v. 24, 25, 26.* The Daughter of Pharaoh had adopted him for her Son, and by that Right of Adoption he would have inherited the Crown after her Father's Death, but he prefer'd an afflicted State before this greatest of Earthly Dignity, for the sake of a better Inheritance, and a more Glorious Crown which he expected in another world, as the reward of his sufferings in this. And as this Faith begat in *Moses* mean and undervaluing thoughts of the enjoyments of this world, so it enabled others to tri-

umph over the frowns and terrors of it. *Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection, v. 35.* Which probably refers to the sufferings of the 7 Brethren in the hist. of the *Maccabees*, who in hopes of a more glorious Resurrection, submitted cheerfully to the acutest torments, scorning a deliverance upon unlawful terms. And the same, nay, greater and more wonderful effects did this Faith produce in the Primitive Christians, who having a clearer revelation of a future state, were so transported with the thoughts of that happiness which God had promised to the Faithful Christian, that they were ambitious to purchase it, not only with the loss of the good things of this world, but even with Death, and the most exquisite torments, to which they Freely offered themselves, and underwent them with an invincible constancy and resolution. And had we the Faith of these renown'd *Hero's*, did we as firmly believe the rewards of another world, we should dread the evils, and value the enjoyments of this far less, and more cheerfully comply with every duty which God requires as the condition of our future happiness. This grace therefore being of so great use and advantage to us, it concerns us to use our best endeavours to strengthen and encrease our Faith. And the most effectual means of this, is the consideration of the Wisdom and Power of God, which *enable him to do whatever he pleases.* He who duly considers this, can have no temptation to doubt the performance of

of any thing that God hath promised. *For nothing can be impossible to infinite Wisdom, arm'd with Almighty Power.* Has God promised to take care of, and provide for them that worship and serve him? We may with the greatest Confidence depend upon him. An infinitely wise and powerful Being can find out ways for our Relief, let our condition be never so desperate. He who fed the *Israelites* with Quails and Manna in the barren Wilderness, and made a Rock supply them with Refreshing Streams for their Thirst, can provide for us by ways extraordinary, and by some unseen accident change our adverse for a more prosperous Fortune. Hath God declared that he will raise our dead Bodies out of the Dust? We may rely on his word, for what he has promised he is able to perform, all things being possible to an infinite Power. The reason of Men's Doubts and Disbelief of God's Promises and Declarations, is their measuring God by themselves. They cannot conceive how such and such things should be effected or come to pass, and therefore will not allow the possibility of them to God himself. Can God prepare a Table in the Wilderness, say the distrustful *Israelites*? and to the *Atheist* or *Sceptic* the Doctrine of the Resurrection seems a gross Absurdity. How can these things be? as if every thing were impossible; that is, not within the reach of their reason and foresight: Whereas, did we reflect upon our own Weakness & Ignorance, and compare them with the almighty Power and Infinite Knowledge of God, this would prove an effectual Means to cure our Doubts, and Silence all our murmurings.

What remains then, but that we study by serious and frequent Thoughts and Consideration of these things, to strengthen and improve our Faith. For in proportion to the strength of our Faith will be our Trust and Dependance on God, and our Obedience to his Commands. Our full Perswasion of Gods Providence, in caring for us, will support and make us content in a state of Want. And a well-grounded Belief of the Glorious Rewards of a future State will conduct us safely through the Snares and Temptations of this world, in a patient continuance in well doing, and at last bring us to the Possession of that unspeakable Happiness, which our blessed Saviour hath purchased for us: To whom, with the Father and Eternal Spirit, be ascribed all Honour, Glory and Praise, for evermore.

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